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HANNAH CLIMENA PIXLEY

A Life in Monterey, 1862-1953

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HANNAH CLIMENA PIXLEY

A Life in Monterey, 1862-1953

Edited with an introduction
by

Peter Murkett



Monterey, Massachusetts

HANNAH CLIMENA PIXLEY *A Life in Monterey, 1862–1953* is a publication of Monterey News, Inc., Monterey, Massachusetts. It was edited and typeset by Peter Murkett, Editor, *Monterey News*, and designed by Ian Jenkins, Peter Murkett, and Deborah Reed.

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Monterey News gratefully acknowledges Don and Ellen Coburn, who first showed us the story.

We are also indebted to the descendants of Hannah Pixley for their gracious help in gathering this material: Mrs. Flora Brantley of Raleigh, North Carolina; Mrs. Charlene Abderhalden and Mr. Elmer Forrest of Lee, and Mrs. Linda Lewis of Otis, Massachusetts.

Cover background: the first and last pages of the composition book in which Mary Ariail recorded the story dictated by her mother.

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Introduction

In 1904, Hannah Climena Pixley Ariail, wife of Stokes Smith Ariail, bought a house and 150 acres of land on Beartown Road in Monterey, Massachusetts, where she lived until 1951. In 1976, Don and Ellen Coburn bought what had come to be known as the "Ariail house."

One day Elmer Forrest of Lee paid an unexpected visit to the Coburns. He recounted how as a young man he would snowshoe up into Beartown Forest with his father to check on his Gramma Ariail and Auntie Mew, who lived together in the old house, snowbound for many months every year. Elmer recalled that she greeted visitors gun in hand, and that he would bring her Granger rough-cut tobacco, which she smoked in a clay pipe. In time, Elmer Forrest gave the Coburns a copy of his Gramma Ariail's autobiography, a nugget of family history preserved in a handwritten composition book which had been typed up by his niece, Mrs. Flora Brantley, of Raleigh, North Carolina.

Mrs. Brantley wrote that the original was a "black and white composition notebook given to me by my mother, Vera Forrest Beckley. It was evidently a notebook of my great grandmother's, Hannah Climena Pixley.... The original has no punctuation, capitalization, or paragraphs, and I corrected it only to make it more legible to read. Some words I copied just as written, because I couldn't find them in the dictionary. This was supposedly dictated and written by her daughter, Mary E. (Mamie) Ariail."

The descendants of Hannah Pixley graciously permitted us to print her story serially in the Monterey News. This booklet includes the complete autobiography as well as additional materials previously printed in the News.

Hannah Pixley was born in 1862, and lived in Monterey and New Marlborough all her life. Telling her story in a strong, unschooled voice, she described brutal childhood episodes along with innocent adventures. The resilient girl became a capable, independent woman who led a long life of steady routine bound to the farm and the seasons. Through the entire story runs a mystery, as Hannah Pixley maintained there was an untold secret surrounding her birth and parentage. She may have imagined that mystery, but the events, names, places, and dates of her story fit neatly with extant, independent accounts and records. The mystery she embraced remains for each reader to solve.

— Peter Murkett
Monterey, May 1996

PART I

HANNAH CLIMENA PIXLEY

This is the true life story of a Berkshire County woman who is now seventy-four years old, as it was written for her daughter beginning with her childhood. It is not fiction but reality. How often I hear people say, If I could live my life over again, but I will say if I had to live my whole life in secret as I have had to, I would not want to live it all over again. As I sometimes used to see it as a child, sometimes in want, sometimes in cruel things that was done in the olden times that I will tell later, for there are often things in real life that are never told, for as I write this the last one has gone down to the grave with one secret untold that could, I think, of [have] told everything.

Now my story opens with what little there was told about me as a babe. It seems there was not much of a mother for me. I was left with supposed-to-be grandparents to be brought up while an infant on cracker water and soft crackers to live or die while the woman that claimed me as her child nursed another baby girl at her own breast. That always seemed strange to me, and what is more so, that girl grew up to look and act just like my supposed-to-be mother, while I grew up entirely different. It always seemed strange to me that an own mother should cast aside her own child to nurse and love another not her own. By the way the girl she did nurse is dead. One time I heard her singing these words in after years. Here are the words of what she was singing: What could I do? What could I say? How could I bear my child to go away?

I saw she was very unhappy over something, so I said, Mother, come to dinner.

Then she answered me like this: I am mother to no one but my son.

Just what she meant by that I never knew, for she never told me. So now I will resume my story and leave people to judge for themselves until later, for I have found in my seventy-four years of life that this is a queer

old world and truth is far stranger than fiction. As my story will tell of my life from childhood up till now, I will have to turn back the pages of life a great many years to resume my story.

It begins at an old farm house that stood on the old stage highway where dwelt a kind hearted old man and his old wife. She was a hard-working old woman, very crabbed and driving. They had raised four girls and one son, and that boy had always been his mother's idol. She never allowed her husband to correct him for anything he had done. I often heard poor old Grandfather say my only son ruined me.

What that meant I did not understand, yet I always felt there was a deep mystery there, something I could not see into. One thing was this Grandfather had a big farm barn built not far from the house. A short distance from that he hired a deep well dug seventy-two feet deep at a

great expense, as they had to blast forty-seven feet through solid rock. I have heard them say that it was the only water supply for the whole farm, and as near as I could ever learn, about the

A deep mystery.
time I appear on the scene, or farm rather, that never-failing well was suddenly stoned up and covered over with large stone, thereby cutting off the water supply for his farm entirely. Then grandfather had to go and buy a water wright on another man's land, buy pipe for a boot, a quarter of a mile, hire the ditch dug and pipe laid at another great expense. Then he built a water house with a great deep watering trough running through it out to the highway to water thirsty horses.

Now here is where I was when first I begin to hear about myself from an old neighbor woman who had come up to call on Grandmother. She finds me a blue-eyed curly-haired child about two years old on the top of that watering trough playing in the water, my clothes soaking wet. She told me that she took me in and put dry clothes on me and she told me she could never see just how it could be, for most every time she came to see Grandmother she would find me up on the top of the side of that tank of water, leaning over to play in the water where if I had fallen in I would have drowned. It was a wonder I did not catch cold and die. This old woman told me that she had lost her little girl just my age. She told my old Grandmother if they did not want me she and her husband would take me, but for some reason they would not give me up, although Grandmother never seemed to care for me or have any love for me. I used to often hear her say, I don't see what you was ever here for.

The best friend I had was poor old Grandfather. He never give me an unkind word as long as he lived. I think he loved me. He always called me

the little gal. He never knew I was at play over the water tank where I was in danger of being drowned, for he never would have allowed anything like that. For he was one good old man and when I got old enough to know, I sure did love him. I soon learned if I wanted anything to ask poor old Grampa and I got it. I don't think that suited Mother, for she used to say, Yes, he thinks more of you than he ever did his own children.

Then Grandmother would scold and say, Yes, he is just as much of a child as she is.

But I think the old man knew a lot and felt sorry for me, and poor old Grandfather I think he knew a great many things he did not dare tell.

He was a very kind-hearted old man. I never knew anyone to go hungry from his door. Sometimes Grandmother would scold him for giving to people, but all Grandfather would ever say back to her would be, The devil old woman. I can't see anybody in want or hungry. What I have done to help them will never kill me if I never get any pay for what I do to help other people.

He was just like that, while Grandmother was sour as an old sour apple, and that apple would have to be most darned sour to come up to that old woman. I never see her laugh in my life, and never see her smile but once in my whole life, and I will tell you about that later. She thought a child never should play or have any toys whatever, but they should just work and study as soon as they was big enough to pick up chips.

That made my child life very gloomy for as soon as I can remember how I did want a doll. Well an old neighbor came in, took a cob, tied a white cloth over one end for a head and another cloth around the middle of the cob for a skirt. I never can forget how I hugged that, my first doll, up to me. Now think you children of today who have so many boughten things, I often see you too do not love them and care for them as much as I did that poor little corn-cob doll. Well there was no toys for poor children in them days. We did not have gay pictures on magazines as we have today. I remember once when I first went to school I won a prize, it was just a picture of an Indian girl. It cost half a dollar and was not near as pretty as what you see on magazine covers today, but how proud I felt of that picture.

Now I will tell you more of the home and old people I lived with, Grandmother and Grandfather, for I can never remember of seeing my Mother, as they called her to me, until the day she married her second husband who proved to be a brute, a fiend in human form if there ever was one. I will tell you all about them later. Now I will tell about Grandfather and Grandmother.

She spun the wool from Grandfather's sheep to make the stockings,

mittens and flannel for clothing. The flannel she wove into cloth on a hand loom for sheets. It was fine and white, but for Grandfather's shirts and our skirts and dresses it was wove in pretty checks, while for Grandfather's coats and pants it was wove coarser and white then colored plain brown or black. Then it was sent to the foiling machine to have it shrunk up to make it thicker cloth for the men. Then Grandfather raised flax for Grandmother to make linen. It grew very much like very coarse straw. This he had to cut and take to some swamp or wet land to spread on the ground to lay until the next spring to rot the straw so the inside fiber could be got out of the inside of the straw to make linen cloth of. But first it had to hetcheld into what was called tow before it could ever be

*Grandmother
and Grandfather.*

spun on a little wheel. Now I will tell what a hetcheld is. It is just a block of wood about one and three-fourths foot long by ten inches wide. On one end of this block the flax had to be drawn back and forth through them sharp spikes by hand until all the straw came off the inside fiber that was in the straw could be got out to make linen of. For then the tow was spun on a little wheel into the finest of thread to be wove in a hand loom into fine linen cloth for summer garments and sheets, pillow cases and many uses.

Grandfather was a shoemaker by trade but in the meantime worked on his farm where he raised his rye, oats, barley, corn and wheat, also beans and flax, also a very large kind of potatoes that he fed mostly to his cattle, for he always said that potatoes was never worth more than twelve and a half cents a bushel. He raised all his pork, beef, and mutton on his farm. His wheat, rye, and buckwheat he took to the grist mill to have ground into flour. His corn was ground, some coarse for a mush then called samp, some was ground fine for rye and corn bread to be made with molasses, milk, and yeast, then raised and baked in the old house oven. Grandmother would have the oven bricks all hot at bed time, put in the bread then shot up the door. In the morning her bread was all done and warm for breakfast. In them days we lived very plain yet I never see anything taste better than that corn bread and my bean porridge did that I eat out of my little pewter porridger. The porridger was a little dish made for small children to eat out of, but no bread of today baked in our modern stove ovens ever tasted half as good to me as that old rye and corn bread did baked in that old house brick oven years ago, that was on one side of that old fire place. In that old fireplace was two andirons to lay huge logs on for the fire. On one side of that old fire place was a long iron crane it was called, to swing out over the fire to hang a large dinner kettle on to cook the family dinner in, while in front of the fireplace on the floor

was a large stone hearth where I lay many a night to get my lessons by the light of a pine [k]not stuck in that old fireplace. It was far different than the electric lights of today yet it was better than the tallow dips of that time. A tallow dip was an old time tallow candle in an iron candle stick on a stand in the far end of Grandmother's kitchen. The light from the candle used to flicker so, it used to hurt my eyes. In one end of the kitchen Grandfather slept on an old high four-poster bed with curtains over the top and a valence all around the lower part of the bed. There Grandfather slept while Grandmother spun wool on her spinning wheel in the other end of the room by the fire in the old fireplace. I don't think she ever went to bed until after midnight.

One thing happened then that I never forget, although I was not quite four years old at the time. It was in the evening, Grandfather was on the bed that night and Grandmother spinning same as usual. I had been wearing a new pair of shoes that day. The shoes in them days was made of hard coarse leather, made to grease to keep out water for we had no rubber overshoes then. Well at that time I had a wart on my ankle big as a large bean that my shoes had rubbed all day and hurt me so bad it made the tears come in my eyes. I made up my child-mind that wart had hurt me long enough, so that night as I sit by Grandfather's bedside I said to him, Grampa, won't you just sharpen your knife and let me take it?

An operation.

So he told me to bring him his whet stone. Well I got it in a hurry and took it to the bed for him. He sharpened the knife and handed it to me saying, The devil now little gal, be careful and don't hurt yourself with it.

I told him I would be very careful. Then I took the knife, and when he was not looking I cut all around that great wart then I took hold of that wart, shut my teeth tight and pulled with all my strength just as hard as I could until I pulled it out. There, I said, You won't hurt me anymore.

Just then old Grandfather looked at me and see my foot covered with blood. My, but poor old Grampa was scarred and said, The devil little gal, what have you done?

I said, I am not hurt Grampa, I only pulled out that ugly wart, so don't be afraid Grampa.

He called Grandmother right away to do up my foot. She come and just looked at it, then went back to her wheel saying, I shan't touch it now. She will have warts all over her foot and it will serve her just right too. She has no business to of meddled with it anyhow. It will serve her just right if she does.

Then Grandfather spoke up sharp to her. It was the only time I ever

heard him give any one a cross word in the world. Then he said, Now I tell you Clymena, you will do up that child's foot. I know you will and do it right now, too.

Then she got a cloth and done up my foot. I guess she seed that Grampa had got angry. Well be that as it may I never have had a wart since. That was the first operation I ever performed and I will say it was a good one considering my age at that time.

Then Grandfather give me the same old knife that I used for the operation. I remember it was a very old one with a carved bone handle. Years after, Mother made me give it to my half-brother and he lost it. How I did miss my knife. If I had anything given to me when a child and then someone else wanted it, I was made to give it up to them. But I just had to cry over the loss of that knife for that was a keepsake from poor old Grampa, the only one that loved me when I was a small child, for I was only six years old when he died. How I did miss him for as soon as I can remember I was always around with him.

How well I remember the day the cow hooked Grampa's eye out. He had two big red cows with great long horns. That day he took me by the hand and the milk pail when we got to the barn yard he went in to shut the gate and left me on the outside. No sooner had he got in than one of the cows charged on him and run one of her horns in his eye, but he and

Cats and cows. I got him through the gate so I could shut it, then I led Grampa to the house. Poor old man he never see out of that eye after that. Then Gramma milked

the cows after then, and Grampa would drive them up from the pasture at milking time for her to milk. One night poor old Grampa was very sick and Gramma told me I must go down the lane into the pasture and drive up the cows. I was not quite four years old then, so she told me I must not go through any fence, but as I was driving the cows home I see what I thought was the prettiest cat and a lot of spotted kittens, so I followed them until they went under the fence. Then I knew I must not go any farther, so I went on home with the cows and asked Gramma to go with me and get the pretty cat and kittens. Well she scolded me good and told me them was not kittens but skunks, and if I had touched one of them I would of smelt so I could not come in the house. So I always remembered what a skunk was and I had got to stay out doors if I touched one. Gramma had a cat but he was so ugly I could not play with him.

I remember one night Grampa had gone to bed on a high four-poster bed in the kitchen. Gramma picked up her old cat to put him down cellar and he scratched and bit her hand until it was covered with blood. How mad she was. She told the cat, Now I will trounce you and trounce you good.

So she took the cat by the hind legs and thrashed him hard as she

could around Grampa's bed post for a while then threw him down cellar. I never remember seeing that cat again, but I always remembered the word trounce for it was not long after that that I see Gramma putting a pan of something up on the top shelf in the pantry. I asked her what was in it and she told me, Children should be seen, not heard. Get out of the way. Go out and pick up chips.

So I kept thinking about that pan for a couple of days and wishing I knew what was in it. So one day when Gramma was spinning I got in the pantry and climbed up the shelves until I got hold of the edge of that big pan. It was a pan of milk she had put up for cheese. Down it came on top of my head bottom up. Well the thick cream made a blanket all over me, then I hollered, Oh Grannie, I can't see out.

Well she came to my rescue anyhow that time and told me she had a good will to trounce me, and just as soon as I could see out I asked her if she was going to trounce me just as she did the cat. She turned her head and smiled the only smile I ever see on her face, so I did not get trounced that time. If she had told me it was a pan of milk I never would of touched it, but she was just that cranky. She never liked to have a little child ask a question until it was about work or lessons.

When I was four years old I was reading words of four letters then Mother came. The first I ever remember of seeing her she came with a man and took me to town to get me a pair of shoes. When we got back she told me he was my new Papa. I did not like his looks but thought I must love him, so I climbed up on the back of his chair and kissed him, but he knocked me down and told me if I ever done that again he would kill me. I went to bed and they were gone the next morning and I was left with Grandmother.

So the next day Grandmother told me I must go to school. Mother had gone off with her new man. So I put on my new shoes and started for school. When I got to the nearest neighbors, my shoes hurt me so I could not go. I went in and began to cry. They were a kind-hearted old couple and the old man said, That child would not cry like that unless she is hurt.

I told him my feet hurt, then he looked at my feet. They were so swollen he had to cut off my shoes. Then the lady done up my feet in cotton batting and he took me home on his shoulder and told Grandmother never to put them shoes on me again. So then I went barefoot. I must of looked like a little savage, but there was a lady across the road who was dying with dropsy and she used to call me in and comb my hair for school, God bless her.

Finally Mother come and took me to live with her and her husband. He was a brute and a fiend in human form. I must never ask for anything

to eat at the table or look up from my plate. Once I did look up and he threw a carving knife at my head. It cut off a lock of my hair and stuck up in the floor just back of my chair. It came near hitting his old big white cat that set there. My, if he had ever hit that he would have killed me.

He made me watch and take care of thirty geese. I used to have to run up and down the brook to keep them from running away in the spring and fall. Then in the fall I must shell the corn for his hogs. My hands was all blistered and skinned. My fingers are all crooked today from that work. Then one time he had some hay that was full of poison ivy and he knew that it would poison me dreadful, so he told Mother, I must have that load of hay.

She told him I was not big enough. She would load it for him. Then just as soon as he got a lot of the poison ivy on, he took me and threwed

*A fiend
in human form.*

me face downward right into it. All over then I was poisoned dreadful and he would not let her take any care of it. No one can know what I suffered then. At night I had to go up in a garret-like chamber to sleep on a pile of rags on the floor in the

dark and great rats run over me all night. I did not dare cry or make a sound. If I had he would of killed me, so I used to lay and whisper my little prayer and talk to God and ask him to take care of me. For there was no one to care for me. No one to love me. No one to care. I was just a little nobody from county nowhere. After a while Mother, as I shall call her, was going to have a child and her husband was gone every night. I since learned that he was a road agent to rob people. Mother had Grampa and Grandmother go to live with her, then six weeks before her child was born her father fell and broke his hip. Then her husband went and roped and tied poor old Grampa right down to the bed so he could not be turned at all until the doctor come and cut the ropes that bound him down. The doctor told my supposed-to-be step-dad never to let him find them ropes on that old man again, but I knew that doctor never came there without a loaded pistol in his pocket for he knew Mr. G., as I will call him hereafter. This is no fiction, but our true names I had rather leave out, as I am well known here in South Berkshire and have always lived here and visited a great many people who came to see me. Yet they never knew what my life has been and never will unless they read the true story of my life just as I write it now.

To resume my story, Grandfather lived six weeks and died. Grandmother lived on with Mother, then my brother, as he is called, was born. At that time, I was six years old. I remember being sent to a neighbor's to stay until I was sent for. At that time them neighbors I will call Mr. H. and his wife. They lived in Sheffield. They both loved children, but never

had any of their own. What a happy time I spent there for about a week. They had a pack of cards but no play things, so when Mr. H. came in from work after supper he would tell me the pictures on them and show me how to play little games with them until time for me to go to bed. My bed was a nice one and the bedroom opened off the living room right where Mrs. H. would work in the evening. But she thought I would be afraid to get to bed at night so she always had Mr. H. lay on the bed with me until I got to sleep at night. They was very kind to me and wanted to adopt me as their own, but Mr. G. would not let me go to live with them.

So after a couple of weeks they took me home. How I did dread to go home, but Mrs. H. made it as pleasant for me as she could. She told me I had a baby brother to play with and they give me the cards to keep that Mr. H. and I had played with. Mrs. H. also bought me a little doll and dress about six inches tall and a little work basket with a spool of red thread in it. I learned after, that doll and basket cost one dollar. Now they could be got for ten cents. How Mr. and Mrs. H. did cry when they had to take me home, and I did too, for I knew the dreadful home I had. But I did not know the horror that was yet to come, for if I had I think I would of laid down in the brook and drowned my little self. But I did not know so time passed on.

*A pack
of playing cards.*

Sometimes in the daytime when Mr. G. would not be asleep he would get the cards and want me to play games with him until one day a man came to clean house for Mother. He knew Mr. G. well and I will call him Mr. Darby. He found the cards and asked Mother about them. She told him Mr. G. and I played with them. He asked her if she knew the danger it placed me in. He told her if I did not happen to play just to suit him, he would murder me and bury me there somewhere. So he burnt up the cards, so that was the end of my having them, and I think it was all for the best that he did burn them.

We lived about a half a mile off in the lots off from the road and away from all the neighbors. There was a line fence near the house that divided Mr. G.'s place from a big pasture where we had to go through to get on to the main road. The line fence was a high rail fence with a big gate to drive through to get onto the road, as that was a pasture at that time and was full of cattle among them. There was one big bull that was ugly. Sometimes they would be right up by the fence where I had to go through the lot to go to school. Mother used to want to take the baby and stand by the window to watch me go through the herd of cattle to see if I got killed by that big bull. But Mr. G. would not allow her to look out of the window to watch me if he was awake.

When I started for school I used to be so lonesome and I was so small

from being half fed. Finally, there was two little boys, one seven, the other six. I will call them Jimmie and Willie. They used to come down in the lot to meet me to go to school. They had no sister so they called me sister, and said they come in the lot to take care of me. It is a wonder we was not all killed. God must of watched over us and kept us from harm. I remember one night we were coming home from school through the woods and there was a dreadful thunder shower. The little boys had me stand up against a big pine tree. They took off their little coats and put them around me while one stood on each side of me to shelter me from the storm. Oh, how it did thunder and lightening that night. Those same little boys lived to be old men. I met them in after years when I was seventy years old.

A tragedy happened that I shall never forget, I think it was in July. My brother then could sit up on the floor when his father had his last fight. It was a fight to the death. At this time I was seven years old. Grandmother had gone away on a visit, and my brother a creeping baby on the floor. So Mother, baby, and I was all there at home with Mr. G. He lay on the bed this morning after his raid of the night before when Mother's brother came to see her on business. He had a team of horses on a buggy. At the time Mother went out to give him warning to go back. She was too

A fight to the death. late, Mr. G. had heard the wagon. I stood looking out of the window when he jumped off the bed and asked me who was out there. I told him I did not know, for I was afraid to say anything as I had heard him tell Mother that if she ever spoke to anyone he would smash her finer than powder. And I knew Mother had gone to speak to her brother. Well Mr. G. looked out of the window and see who it was. Then he said, I know it's John, and I shall kill him and dance on his corpse. He shall never leave here alive.

Mother begged of him to come to the house, but he threw her over the fence and told her to get into the house and mind her own business while he killed her brother. So Mother went in the house and I run out and hid in the tall grass and peeked under the fence and see the fight. Mr. G. tried to kill her brother with a fence stake. While he kept trying to ward off the blows, finally her brother got his whip out of the buggy. It was an iron-filled whip made to stand up straight in a whip socket for buggy riding in those days. Well when he got hold of the whip he struck Mr. G. three times over the head with the but of the whip that crushed his skull in, for the blood run out of his head and mouth. The ground was all covered with blood where they fit before he struck him with the whip. After he got his scull crushed he give up the fight and started for the

house. I crept out from under the fence and run ahead of him, for I expected him then to kill Mother and me. I remember there was an ax stood up by the door. I told Mother to hide that before he got there for he would kill us with it. But she said, No, if we are to be killed here today, we will leave everything just as it is and die right here.

But I think Mr. G. had just began to come to his senses because when he got to the house he was so weak from loss of blood. He took hold of the side of the door to stand up. Then he told Mother she had been a good wife, too good for such a brute as he had been. Then he wanted her to pick up his boy and hold him up for him to bid the baby goodbye. Then he told the baby, You won't have a father long, but it is for the best that you should never know your father, and I want you to grow up to be a comfort to your mother and never be the man I have been.

Then he told Mother he had left a will for her and the boy. That was the last he spoke. Then Mother got him on the bed in the front room and told me I must run to the neighbor's for help. Well away I went, but not a neighbor would come near the house. They all feared him, so Mother sent me back to have someone get a doctor. The doctor did not come until that night.

At the time this happened Mother had fourteen big boils and an abscess on one arm, and with the pain and his throwing her as he did, and all she had been through that day made her insane. So before the doctor got there she lit a mess of candles and put them on the stove, took the baby and got on the bed in the kitchen and told me I must sit in the door to Mr. G.'s room and watch him and not to go to sleep.

So there I was when the doctor come. He said, Little girl are you all alone?

I told him not to disturb Mother for she acted queer. I thought she was asleep with the baby. Then he told me to get him a bowl. When I got it he asked me if I was afraid of blood. I told him, No, I had seen quarts of blood that day.

Then he went up to the bed where Mr. G. lay and told me to hold the bowl. He tried to get blood out of his arm, but it looked thick and dark. He said there is no help and told me to put the bowl away for he told me Mr. G. would live about forty-eight hours.

Then he went home and I was left all alone in the woods with a dying man, a crazy Mother, and a baby boy. But as soon as the neighbors knew that Mr. G. was past doing any more harm, then they come. I think the doctor must of told them for all the neighbors was nice people. Only Mr. Gleason was such a dreadful man. The people all feared him. I shall never forget the day when the doctors came to examine his body. There was four of them. They all wore stove pipe hats. They took them off and then

one spoke and asked the rest if they was all ready. They said yes, then they took off their coats and all put on long white gloves, went and took him out on the green in front of the pantry window.

There was no one to look after me, so I made up my mind I would know what was going to be done next. So I went in the pantry. I could just stand on my toes and look out of the window, I was so small from being half fed. Then when I see his head took off and in the doctor's hands I knew I had nothing more to fear from him.

Nothing more to fear.

One lady asked me the day of the funeral what I thought of it and I told her he never could hurt me anymore now. Well, she said, I always expected to come to this house on this same occasion, but I thought it would be the other one.

They all thought he would kill Mother or me. Mother often wondered why he would always be gone nights and sleep days, but I found out in after years he was a road agent to rob people. He always kept two good horses, had money, but Mother did not know how or where he got it. Well, after he died, Mother was insane a long time, so Grandmother took my brother the baby and took care of him, and a man took me home to live in his family with a lot of other children.

When I got there I thought it a lovely home. They was all so kind to me except one girl they had, she always liked to hurt other children. I remember one trick she played on me. I had a boil up on my forehead almost as large as an egg, and her father was afraid it was going to leave a bad scar on my face. It was one Monday morning, his wife and the hired girl had got us all ready for school when Kate asked me to go out with her the back way. Then when we got down by the barn she turned around and struck me with her fists right on that boil and smashed it. Oh, how it did hurt. I went to the house, the blood and pus almost blinded me. It was in my eyes and all over my clean dress. Her father see me a-coming and her behind me a-laughing. Then he asked me how that boil got broke like that, and I knew if I told him Kate would get a hard whipping, and I never liked to see a child whipped so I did not answer. So he asked me again and I did not answer. Then he said to me, You are not a sulky child, and now I ask you for the third and last time how that boil got broke and I want you to answer me now.

So then I told him Kate happened to hit it. She still stood laughing. He said, I know her happens-to's.

Then he told the hired girl to clean me up so he could dress the boil where it broke. Then he told Kate to come up to him. He took down his horse whip and how he did whip her. She stood and took it and never cried. She was so mad. Then he dressed the boil and told us to start for

school. Well I went with a sore head and Kate with smarting legs, but that boil never left a scar when it got well.

At that time Mother went violently insane from pain and all the trouble she had gone through. When her brother went on trial for the killing of her husband, I was then at her brother-in-law's. He was kind to me. I did not fear him as I did most everyone. I remember one night as I came in from school he called me up to him and said uncle wants to talk with you. So he set me on a stool at his feet and began to ask me questions about the killing of Mother's husband. I did not know her brother's lawyer sit behind a door writing down all I said, as I was the only one that see all the fight. Her brother was not liked very well, so at the trial some that did not know everything about it at all went and swore against him, and told the time of day when the fight took place. But in the fight, his watch was broke and stopped so at the trial in old Lenox they took me up there and placed me up before twelve men. Then when the case was all heard the man at the desk, I since knew he was the judge, held up the watch to the twelve men and told them to look at that watch and that little child, that was me. For in his mind, we was the only ones there that had spoke the truth. I did not have to say a word at the trial for the lawyer had it all wrote down the time he had uncle ask me the questions, and he wrote the answers as he was hid behind the door so as not to scare me. Them was read in court the day he came to have uncle ask me about the fight. Uncle told the lawyer he must not get where I could see him or I would be afraid and run and hide if I see a stranger. So I sit and talked with uncle about it all until I looked through the other room door and see a stove-pipe hat. Then I jumped and run fast as my legs could carry me. I heard him tell uncle he got all he wanted to know. But at the trial I was scarred, but uncle placed me where they told him to. Then he told me I must sit still, no one was going to hurt me. I must look right at them men in front of me that sit up there. That old court house at Lenox burned down years ago now, but as I look back now, I remember just how it looked then with all them men looking straight at me and oh how scarred I was. But I did not dare stir for I had lived in constant fear for three long years, and if I see a stranger I got out of sight if I could, for fear they would throw a knife or a club at me, just as Mother's husband used to do.

Soon as Mother got over being insane we came back to grandfather's old farmhouse to live. Then Mother took up weaving to support herself, Grandmother, brother, and me. When brother was three years old she married again, an old mountaineer. Then she had one more to support, so as soon as I could pick berries and young winter greens to sell I had to help. There was an old man who drove the stage. It had a long mail box

in front and many a time the old stage would be so full of people, he would sit out on the mail box, put my berries on top of the stage, take me on his knee and drive to town. He sold the berries for me, then at stage time he would bring me home. The young wintergreens I tied in little bunches, then took them to a saloon that Mr. Wright kept. I would hold my basket, knock on the door, and he would come out, take my basket, go in among the men inside while I waited out side, and bring me the pay for them at ten cents a bunch. They would be all sold then I would take all the money home to Mother.

One time the old man that drove the stage give me an orange and I kept it in my hand and he asked me why I did not eat it. I told him I was taking it home to give my little brother half of it. After that he always give me two, so we had one for each of us. When I got through selling that summer I said to him, Now Mr. Joyner I have rode with you all summer, how much is my bill?

Doing business.

The old man laughed, slapped his knee and said, Little Kate, he always called me, that you will make a good financier yet now. If you want to pay me, just pick me two quarts of them late double raspberries that grow near the house, for I have told about them where I board and they won't believe me that they grow double.

So I took a two-quart pail. I shall never forget picking them berries and placing them in layers in that pail until I got it full for him, and oh, how pleased he was. So my first bill was all paid. I was nine years old then.

The next summer I wanted a flower bed, but my step-dad number two told me if I wanted any such foolishness as that, all I could have to plant on was a great flat rock out in the lot. Oh he was some boss after Mother took him home. But never the less my little brother and I went to work with his little cart and got dirt thick enough on that rock to plant in. I remember we planted sunflowers for one thing on that rock and they grew fine. When they go in blossom that year they were all the rage. The ladies wore the small ones and the men bought the larger ones to put in the whip sockets to their buggies. Well we sold three dollars of sunflowers off our rock, so that helped a little. Then the next summer I picked blueberries.

Then I met a little boy and he lived six miles from our place, but he used to walk six miles to come and play with me. In the Summertime we would build houses in the sand. Well that went on until I was a little over twelve years old. I was outside hanging up a little washing I had done when a woman came along all dressed up in silk and stopped to see Mother and told Mother she would pay her two dollars a week for me to

go and live with her. So Mother thought if I could get two dollars a week all the while it would be a fine thing, so this woman was coming after me in a few days. Then that little boy found out that Mother was going to let me go to live with that woman. I never shall forget his walking all the way from his home to see Mother about it. He stepped up to her loom where she was weaving, his eyes blazed, and asked her if she was going to let me go and live with that woman. Mother told him, Yes, the work is light, just to get the mail from the office and run on errands.

Well, said he, that is not it at all. She wants her just because she is pretty, for that woman is a bad woman and keeps a bad house.

Mother said, How do you know anything about her?

Well I do know about her, she is my aunt, and she is a bad woman just the same, and I don't want your little girl to go there, for some day I am going to marry her when I get to be a man.

Well then, said Mother, I will tell the woman that I can't spare her now.

So I did not go and Mother thanked him for coming and telling her and that was the first time I ever see that boy until I was most seventeen for his folks moved away at that time. This is not a story of romance, so I will tell the rest about me and my little boy playmate in the following poem, just as I composed it:

Houses in the sand.

Two children were at play one day
Building houses in the sand,
When the little boy then took
His little playmate by the hand,
Saying, I shall marry you someday,
When I grow to be a man.

Then I shook my golden curls
And laughed in childish glee
As to that little boy I said,
Oh, you will never marry me.

What makes you say so? Do you not love me now?
As a shade of sadness passed o'er his childish brow.
For I shall build for us a house when I am a man,
And I shall build it right down by the salt-sea sand.

Then his parents moved so far away
That little boy I never see for many and many a day.

Then I oft times wondered if he had build that cottage by the sea,
And I also wondered where that little boy could be,
When one summer night, it was in a crowded hall,
I had just been voted the fairest of them all,
When a tall young stranger came walking through the hall.

He stepped up to my side and took me by the hand,
Saying, Here at last I have found you, my child-sweetheart,
My playmate of the sand.
I loved you as a child, now I love you as a man.
Now I have a cottage down by the salt-sea sand,
And it will be my greatest pleasure
If you will accept my heart and hand
And dwell with me forever down by the salt-sea sand.

Then we danced the hours away
Merrily the band did play,
While we set one year ahead to be our wedding day.
Then he went home to his cottage
His cottage by the salt-sea sand
For I had given him the promise of my hand.

Then, alas, he heard a cry for help
Far out upon the waves.
He sprung into the ocean another life to save.
The waves rolled o'er him, he sunk
Beneath the waves. I never see him more
For his body there lies buried
Down by the salt-sea shore.

Now I will go back to when I was twelve years old and tell of another little boy I knew and my first proposal of marriage. But first I must tell about that little boy. It was an Irish boy by the name of John. His parents came to this country when he was six years old, then his parents both died a couple of years later leaving him all alone with no relatives in this country. He had to shift for himself. No one looked after poor children then as they do now, so John lived the best way he could, sometimes on what people threw away. In the summer he often slept out of doors, and when it got colder in livery stables where they kept horses, and he wore anything that was given him. Then he would run errands and do anything he could to earn an honest penny. He learned to count his money and save it, until at about fifteen years of age he got a horse and wagon and

started peddling small things.

One day he came to our house. I stood up on a box washing, as I done all the washing at that time but was so small I had to stand on a box to rub the clothes. He told me he had come to ask me to marry him. I stopped work and looked at him and told him I was too young to marry and he was too. Then he said, I want a home. I can hire one room and get enough for you and me and I know you cook and wash and I know I could make a home for us.

But I told him no, that we were nothing but children and getting married was for old people, not children like us.

That was the last time I see him. I heard after that he went to New York and got in a store as an errand boy and was so honest and faithful that the owner of the store had him educated for his bookkeeper and he finally married the owner of the store's only daughter. And he was just a poor but honest Irish boy left all alone in the world without father or mother. Well I think that he done far better than he would if I had accepted his proposal of marriage, don't you dear reader think so, too?

A marriage proposal.

When I was fourteen Grandmother died. Mother went insane so her sister took her and her boy home with her and I was left to keep house for Ross, Mother's third husband. Old Newton Joyner drove a passenger wagon at that time. One night when he came from town he brought in a stranger, drove past the house a-ways, then stopped. A man got out and came to the house Mother's brother lived in across the road from us. He had started to go and feed his pigs, but when he see that man coming to our house, he set down his pails and went to the barn on a run to get out of sight. I see him run and thought it strange, as always when he see a stranger he would always greet them with hello. I stood by the window watching. Well the man came to our house and asked for Elijah Pixley. I told him he had been dead for years. Then he asked for Clymena Pixley, his wife, and I told him she had just died and was buried. Then he asked for Mary Pixley Thompson. I told him she was insane and had been taken away. Then he asked for her daughter Emma Thompson. I told him she had been dead for years. Then he said, Girl, who are you?

A stanger visits.

I told him I was Mary Pixley Thompson's daughter. Then he asked how old I was and I told him I was fourteen the twenty-fourth of October. Then he asked me if none of them ever told me of my parentage. I told him nothing very honorable that I ever heard of. Then Ross got up and told him to leave the house. He told Ross, I am a gentleman. I will go, but

I have come a thousand miles to see this girl. For all the truth they have ever told her is her right age. That is correct. Now girl, please step outside, I want to talk with you.

Then he said, They have lied to you for you came of very honorable parents. You was not her child. For, said he, I could tell you all about your parents, for I knew them well.

That made me mad. I told him if he had known the secret of my birth all these years and I left in poverty, abuse, disgrace, and hardship for fourteen years, he could still keep the secret. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, You are just like your proud mother was, and you look like her too, with your great big flashing eyes. But, said he, I will do as you say, keep the secret. But I will tell you that you was put here when you was a little babe three weeks old.

Then he went and got in the wagon to go up to the hotel where Mr. Joyner put up. I think he must of told Mr. Joyner about me, for his son, H. C. Joyner, told me once that he thought the time would come when it would be proved that I was not Mary Pixley's child, For, said he, I do not think you are.

Well I never was like any of that family in looks or ways. None of them wanted me, I was just an odd sheep in the flock and I never liked their ways either. Somehow I never seemed to fit in.

I remember one day I found in a bureau drawer a little package and I undone it. In it was some very fine baby clothes of very fine cloth and made beautiful. I took them to Mother, as I always call her, and asked her what they was. She told me them was my clothes. I asked her why her boy did not wear them when he was a baby. She said she never put them on him and I did know his baby dresses was made of print calico and all his baby clothes was cheap goods and nothing like the fine clothes I found in the drawer that she told me was mine.

Well I grew up with them, but they never cared for me. I was just one too many. As near as I could ever learn, I came about the time the old well was stoned up. I asked Mother in her last days if some one did not lay in the bottom of that well and she told me it was nothing she ever done. I told her I did not think it was, yet as I grow older, I oft times wonder if there is where my true parents are. I know not, so I will go on with my story.

In the place where we lived on the old farm in that neighborhood there was one boy and three of us girls. Well I remember when he got his first store pants. He came up big as life all dressed up with his new pants on and asked another girl and me to go to the ice glen with him. Well we went and got some ice. It was in the early fall and when we was coming home through a nut grove he see a big woodchuck, so he went after the

woodchuck and told us girls to wait in the nut grove for him. Well we waited and waited thinking he had got lost. Well what had happened was this: In them days the first clothes that was made was sewed with a chain stitch that had only one thread, and that chuck had got that thread in his teeth and ripped up one pants leg and down the other, and he had to go until he found a thorn tree to get the thorn pins to pin up his pants. Well he got the woodchuck, however, and came home just as proud as he went with his new store pants on.

Then he wanted us three girls to go out in a boat one day, so we all four went. The lilies were beautiful. I was standing up on the end seat of the boat reaching for a lily when his back was towards me. Just then he said, O Nettie, there is a fine one.

The girls were in the other end of the boat. As he turned the boat quick for her to get the flower, it throwed me into the pond. I went to the bottom. None of us girls could swim. How the girls did holler. He told them to keep still and both sit on the other side of the boat while he laid across it and watched for me

Into the pond.

to come up. The first time he could not reach me, so I held my breath all I could under water and went down once more. When I got to the bottom once more I grabbed a bunch of green weeds that grew on the bottom of the pond, kept them in my hand and held them tight. When I came up the next time I just raised my arms high above my head, so Clarence Johnson caught hold of my wrists and pulled me back into the boat. Then he asked me what I had in my hand. I told him that was some pretty greens that grew on the bottom of the pond and I wanted to show them what was down there where I had been.

Yes, he says, here are you cool as a cucumber and we scarred most to death.

I told him that there was no cause for fear, for I had made up my mind I should not grab the side of the boat or them or I could drown them just because I was in the pond. My life when young was not very pleasant most of the time, so I did not value it very high. Well anyhow, the sun soon dried me off and I was just as good as ever and ready to see what would happen next. We had a good time that day and we got lots of flowers.

When I was nine years old I was taken with rheumatism. One hip and one knee was all drawn out of shape. The doctors said in them days that a child could not have rheumatism. I was in bed all winter and if it had not been for a neighbor woman I would of been a cripple for life. Then when I got up I was taken with cholera of the nerves. Mother got some little pills from the doctor for me. I grew white as a sheet. Then Ross, her husband,

told her to let him see them. He took one, tasted it, then threw the box in the stove and said, Them are just arsenic and it is killing her.

So that was the end of my doctoring at that time.

Then I went back to school and tried to study nights to catch up. While Grandmother spun by the light of a pine knot in the fireplace, I lay on the floor by the stone hearth and studied my books. Soon I was taken almost blind and that ended my education, only what little I have picked up since, for when I could see better I had to work. But as soon as I could see good I went up to Housatonic to the library and got books. We could

Going for books. get three books, keep them three weeks, then take them back and get three more. One day we, that is my cousin and I, wanted to go and exchange our books, but the men had taken all the

horses away to work except a big four-year-old colt they called Duke. He had never been drove but once, and then he had been drove in a double harness with an old horse. When the men all got away, my cousin Nettie and I went to the barn, took out the colt, then we got the harness on him, hitched him to a buggy, and drove up to the library in Housatonic to get our books. Well it was quite a drive from Monterey, but we got there all right, but there was no place to hitch our horse. I saw a man standing by the road and I asked him if he would hold our horse while we got our books. He told us he would. When we came out he asked us if that was a colt. We told him, Yes, that was the second time he had ever been drove.

Then he said, Girls, you will surely get your necks broken.

We came back all safe and sound, however. Duke never got scarred but once. When we got back, we unharnessed the colt and put him in the barn where we took him from. Then at night when the men came home we asked the men if they would like some new books to read. They told us, Yes, but you ain't got any.

Then we got our books and showed them we had. Then they said, Have you girls took that colt and went after books?

We told them we did. They told us it was a wonder we was not both killed for they had not thought it safe to drive him on a buggy yet until he had been drove more with an older horse. Well we came out all right, however, so then the men could do the same if they wanted to, for we had got the colt broke to a single harness all right and was all ready for what we might do next.

Well, I have been growing older since I started to write this book. It is now 1940 and I am seventy-seven years old now, so I must hurry up and finish it while my memory is good. I hope the one that publishes it will please correct all my mistakes.

When I was a small child us little ones was not allowed white paper to mark on. If we did not have any brown paper we had to take birch bark. Oh, how we did want white paper like the big girls had. One day my little friend Nettie was up to Grandmothers with me, and Mr. Huntley came in selling writing paper. He was a very large middle-aged man with a very long full beard. He told us little girls if we would give him a kiss he would give us a bunch of writing paper. We told him to bend over. He told us we had got to kiss him when he stood up.

Well we looked at him, for we wanted that paper, then Nettie told me, Minnie, we can climb. For we did climb small trees. So she went on one side of him and I on the other and climb up and sit on his shoulders and kissed him under his eyes where there was no whiskers. Then he bent over and stood us on the table and kissed us both. He stood us on the floor and gave us both a bunch of writing paper. We thought more of that paper than a child of today would think of a twenty-five-dollar toy, for we never had any play things.

Nettie and I got a couple of Grandmother's brooms and was riding broom sticks for horses when Grandmother saw us, give us a lecture and made us put them up. She had company that day and told the old lady that was visiting her that I would never be anything but a tom boy and she never could see what I was ever put there for. I never forgot what that old lady told Grandmother. She said to leave the child alone for the wildest colts made the best horses. Well I did not wait to

hear any more, so Nettie and I went out to the orchard in front of the house where the men had been picking apples. There was a short ladder up

The wildest colts.

against the trunk of the tree, so up the ladder we went. When Grandmother called to us to scold us some more, we was way out on a limb in the apple tree throwing down apples. Then we had to go in, sit prim and be little ladies, or go and pick up chips. Well it was not much of a choice, but we went to the chip pile for the chips could not scold us all the time.

That day that old lady told Grandmother she need not worry about me, if I lived to grow up I would always take care of myself. Well I have. For mother, as I called her, always lived with me and my family and died at the age of ninety-three years.

So I took care of myself and my family and mother too, for ten years. Mother lost her mind and was a constant care, just like a little child. At last she was in bed seven months with cancers. It was dreadful, but I took care of myself and all the rest. Besides, I have always had to, so I can't see as they missed it very much in taking in me, a little stolen waif that was stolen from my parents and left there with them. I sure had a hard life, for Mother had a son that was the apple of her eye and I must take care of him.

One time, she had some cane-seat chairs and my cousin and I was not allowed to sit in them for fear we would hurt them. Then she bought a little ax for her boy, for she would get everything he wanted. And the first thing he chopped was in the center of one of her cane-seat chairs. It was ruined but that was all right. It was her boy. Then next, he cut his thumb half off with his ax, then how she did lecture me and told me I was to blame. And I was not in the room at the time. Then she got a muzzle-loading gun for him and I must go a-hunting with him and chase squirrels around trees over in Mr. Gibson's nut grove for him to shoot. It's a wonder I did not get shot. Then I had to carry the game home for him.

I was always glad when it was over, for if anything had of happened to him, what would they do with me? They always kept my nerves on edge telling me if anything happened to him I would be to blame. And he would do just as he wanted to. Anyway, I could not make him mind for Mother and Grandmother had always let him have his own way in everything. And I must wait on him and do just as he told me. And how afraid I used to be sometimes and tremble for fear something would happen to him, for in my child-mind I thought then they would hang me. I was glad when I got a little older and could get away from home.

One time there was a woman that had a blind daughter and she used to play the accordion. So her mother wanted us girls to go up to her house some night and sing for Alice, as she wanted to learn to play and sing the song of the frozen girl. So Clarence Johnson took his oxen that he drove with rope lines on the bob sleighs one night, and took a load of us young folks up there to sing for the blind girl. One young man that went played the violin so he could play the music to learn Alice. So she learned the song of the frozen girl so she could sing and play it.

*Song of the
frozen girl.*

Then her mother wanted the fiddler to play for a square dance, for Alice had not danced a step in the fifteen years she had been blind. So we danced a set and took Alice through the set. Then we sung other old-time songs. Her mother asked her to play and sing "The Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bethenell Green" for us.

Her mother said, I know you don't like the song, but these girls and boys have been so kind to come and sing for you tonight, won't you sing it for them?

So she sung and played it for us. It was one of the best songs I ever heard. Then Alice told us she had enjoyed that night the most of anything since she was blind. So they kept wanting us to stay, she enjoyed it so much.

It got to be 'most morning. When we started for home we was all

sleepy, but the old oxen went to sleep. They see a haystack with the barn way open so in there they went to eat off that hay stack. It had began to get daylight. Then we woke up and Johnson was getting the oxen out of the lot when the old farmer see us from up to his house, but did not know who we were. But he hollered at us and said he would have us all arrested for disturbing the peace. Not one of us had spoke. Then Johnson spoke to the oxen but when we got on the road the oxen started on a run for home and left the old farmer yelling after us. Then one of the boys called to him that he better go take in his chimney. He thought it was a-going to rain. He did not have us arrested and could not, for we had not disturbed the peace at all, only got to sleep that was all. And we had give the blind girl a very happy time. I was always glad we did, for I don't think them oxen eat enough of that old swamp hay off that stack to hurt that man at all.

Then Clarence's father got him a driving horse and buggy to take us girls out riding. So as soon as he got it he asked Nettie Kimberley to come and get me and go for a ride. It was a nice moonlight night and Nettie come and asked Mother if I could go and stay with her that night. Mother told her yes, but I had a cold and I must take a cup of ginger and molasses to take when I went to bed. So we took the cup of ginger and molasses and started. Then Nettie told me that Clarence was coming to take us for a ride with his new horse, but she had a cold and she had not told her mother. So that night her mother came and tucked us in to bed and put out the lights. Then she went to bed. Then when we heard her father and mother snore in their sleep we got up and dressed, locked the door out of the living room, hid the key, and went for our ride with Clarence and the new horse. For Clarence and Nettie was keeping company together and was going to get married soon as he was twenty-one. Well, we went around the lake and all went well until we got in to Hartsville village. The moon was shining bright and we see a road full of men going the other way. Clarence said that looks strange to see all of them a-foot. I will turn around and follow them and see what it all means, but he did not understand horses as well as oxen, so in turning he run into Mr. Sheldon's hitching post. Then he had to get out and unhitch the horse and back out the buggy. Well it made some noise but he kept as still as he could, but Nettie and I knew folks was trying to see who he had with him so we kept the lap robe over her and my head. Oh we got out all right after a while then come right straight home, thanked Clarence for our niceride, bid him good night, unlocked the door, went in and went to bed, and her mother never woke up.

So the next morning her mother came and woke Nettie and me for

Nettie to do the chores at the house and barn so her father and mother could both go to work. Her mother was going down to Hartsville that day to work for Mrs. Sheldon. But when she got down there Mrs. Sheldon began at Mrs. Kimberley about Johnson's running in to her hitching post the night before and told her Nettie and I was with him. Well she just guessed that, for she never see our heads. That made Mrs. Kimberley mad and she told Mrs. Sheldon, Yes everything that is ever done is laid to them two girls and there never was two better girls ever lived, and she knew just where we was for she see us to bed and put out our light.

Mrs. Sheldon told her she lied and we was in Hartsville last night. Mrs. Kimberley told her she could swear on a stack of Bibles as high as her house. We was at her house asleep at night and she would not stay and work for a woman that would lie as she did about us girls.

So she came home mad as a hornet. Poor *One good woman.* soul, she was so sure she was right for she found Nettie and me in bed just where she left us. For when we got back, we eat the ginger and molasses and never took a bit more cold. But when her mother came home hopping mad we went out to do the barn chores and be where we could have a good laugh. Poor Mrs. Kimberley was one good woman. Heaven bless her. She loved children and wanted them to be happy and have a good time.

One time when Nettie and I was small we wanted to slide down hill, but we did not have a sled. I was staying with Nettie that day and her mother had gone to work and there was a fine crust of snow up on the side hill. So Nettie and I took two of her mother's milk pans up on the hill, sit in them and slid down hill in fine shape. Sometimes we spun around swift. We had a good time, but it was bad for the pans. Her mother asked us if we had been sliding down hill in her milk pans and we told her, Yes that was all we could find to slide on. Then she told us not to do that any more. So then we let the pans alone.

Then Nettie's father got her a hand sled so she and I had fun with that until there came an icy crust on the snow and we both had new shoes. But sliding down hill and digging our heels in the crust cut the backs of our shoes. And just as Nettie's father was fixing her shoes, Mother took mine over for him to fix. Then the old man swore and said it was our having a sled and he should take that sled to the chopping block. He did, and that was the last of the sled. So when he was gone we used to take his scoop shovel and slide on it. One day we broke the handle and Mrs. Kimberley told us to stand it just where we took it from and we did. She never told the old man we children broke it and he never knew how it got broke. Nettie's mother always liked to see the children and young folks have a

good time and would do all she could to make it pleasant for them, God bless her.

One night there was to be a dance up Cheshire where the Alteray school is now. A New York family by the name of Purdy bought it and give a party that night. We had been invited, so Clarence Johnson got a two-seated wagon and took Nettie Kimberley, who became his wife after that, and my cousin Nettie Pixley and me up to the party. We had a fine time, but coming home in going down hill the hold-back straps broke and the horse run and making the turn in the road near my home, jumped across the road and threw us wagon and all onto a stone wall. Nettie Kimberley and I was under the wreck. Then the horse hit Johnson a blow with her foot in the head and knocked him out. Nettie Kimberley and I was cut up very bad. The horse had cleared herself from the wagon but Nettie and I wiped the blood off from us and started bringing

Clarence to life if we could. When he come to, then we turned our attention to my cousin Nettie Pixley. We thought she was dead. She did not stir, so

A wagon wreck.

we three lifted her up and carried her to my home and they got a doctor for her. We all stayed with her until the doctor got there and examined her and told us she was not hurt a bit, only sound asleep. He said it is the other three that is badly hurt. But we told him we did not need his help as we only had cuts and bruises. The horse had gone home and the wagon was just kindling wood, so that ended our dance that night. We took care of our cuts and bruises and came out all right.

In going to dances I met a young violinist. He fell in love with me and I with him, but my Mother, as I call her, objected. I was not allowed to see him if they knew of it, but he told his sister that I was the only girl he wanted to marry. So she planned for me to go and stay all night with her and go with her the next day to the Fourth of July to Turner's at Lake Buel. Then we could go on the steamboat down to Gibson's Grove to meet her brother and get away from Mother and old Ross, her husband.

Well we met there and laid our plans to write to each other often until he finished his work for a wealthy farmer that year. But they had an only daughter and she fell in love with the poor fiddler, as my folks called him, and wanted him, so his letters from me he never got. And in the meantime a young engineer came to our house to stay one winter, and he wanted me to marry him. So I never got a letter from my lover. Then finally I got a chance to leave home and go to work near the post office. Then I wrote to my lover once more. I got his letter and it was just a heart-breaking letter. It told how he never got one of my letters and thought I had jilted

him. Then he said, Oh my God, their daughter got in trouble and has laid it to me and I am poor and have no way of getting out of it. The child is not mine but she wanted me, and took that way to get me. Yet she knew I love you. She must of got the letters you wrote me.

Well they had that one child then he died young, so it did not do her very much good to get him in that way.

Well time passed on, then I never wanted to marry anyone and never would if my folks had treated me decent and not made a slave of me. For there was several. I refused to marry one young man I met at a kitchen dance. One night I was feeling sad and out of place, so I left the dancers and went out in the kitchen to be alone. I had just sit down there when out came Mike McCarty, a young farmer, and sit down by my side. He told me he came out to talk with me, then he asked me to marry him. I told him I was sorry but my answer must be no. Then he asked me if there was someone else. I told him no. Then he asked why I would not marry him, and I told him he was a nice young man and the girl he married ought to love and care for him, and I could not. Then he told me he would be so good and kind to me that I could not help but love him after a while. I told him no, then he told me if that was my final answer that he should never

marry, but he hoped if I ever needed help he would be near to help me in any way.

*Marriage proposals
in a checkered life.*

Well I never see him for years after that night until I was married and had my oldest girl Mary, a big girl, when his wish came true. We was on a farm at the time. We had

an ugly hog get out and Mary and I was trying to get her in the pen. My husband see us in trouble and so he hid under the fence and left Mary and me to get her the best way we could while he lay and watched us. And sure enough Mike came over the mountain and see us, then he stopped and helped Mary and me. He had seen Ariail hide, and asked Mary what it meant for he just see a man hide under the fence up the road. Mary told him that was Daddy, for he had seen the trouble we were having and hid. Then Mike told Mary, your Mother was the only woman in the world I ever wanted. Your Father got her then he treats her like this. I cannot stand it to know how she is treated. He never married. That was the first and last I ever see him after that night. When I refused to marry him it was not long before he was found in the river dead. He had a sad life but at last all his cares was ended.

Mike had a brother James that never married. Years after, I was to a party one night and James was there, an old bachelor and an old lady, Mrs. Standard, and I heard her say to him, James I bet you was a handsome young man. How was it you never married?

He told her, You have asked me and I will tell you the truth. The only woman I ever wanted is here tonight. Years ago we was to a party one night, my brother and I, and I see her too out in the kitchen and I started out to ask her to marry me, when I heard my brother asking her to marry him. I heard her refuse him and I thought if she refused my brother, as nice a man as he was, there was no hope for me. So I went in and joined in the dance with the rest of the company. I made up my mind that night that I should never marry and I never have. My brother never knew we both wanted the same girl.

When I heard his story I knew, for I was the one who refused his brother that night at that party. Yet he never knew I was where I heard him tell it all to Mrs. Standard.

Just a short time before I refused Mike I was a visiting a friend of mine whose son, a railroad engineer, came to see his mother and one evening asked me to go to Church with him. I went as it was near her house. As we was walking to Church he said to me it would be the happiest day he would ever see if I would be his bride. I told him I did not want to marry anyone. I was no flirt and I did not encourage anyone. For my heart belonged to my poor fiddler, the one I loved and the one that loved me and we were parted forever. He said if I would not marry him, he hoped the next time he took out his engine it would kill him for he had rather die than live without me. It did not kill him, however, for he left his job years after to become a hobo.

Oh, what a queer world this is and what a checkered life I have had as I sometimes think it over from childhood to old age. I am now eighty years old. Well little book, there is a lot yet to tell you.

In this book it tells of a Mr. G. in the forepart. That G. means Gleason. Now I tell who the Mr. G is for now my supposed-to-be half brother is dead. I will tell more. He never knew but what we were half brother and sister. I never told him what I knew. He was married three times. He left a wife and four children. He shot himself and is in a suicide's grave. I think it would of been different if his mother had not brought him up to think everyone must cater to him and do as he said. Well in his case that could not be so at least. When I was young and lived with him at home I was no better than a slave for them all. I had a very hard life but I got through somehow and I am not going to commit suicide either. I want to live to finish this book if I can. I had to work for them all. Then I had to do sewing and knitting for other folks to get my clothes.

Then they took a man to board that came from the West. After a while he asked me to marry him and I told him I did not want to marry anyone. Then he asked me if I would knit him two pair of woolen socks. I told him,

Yes, for two dollars.

So he got the yarn and when I was finishing off the last pair Arthur's Mother came and give me a lecture about working for the boarder when I ought to be working for my brother, as she called him. I told her I had heard that old story about my working for my brother and not earning anything to clothe myself with for the last time. I would marry the boarder and get out of there. I had been tormented long

Escape? enough about always working for Arthur.

I never let Arthur know but what I was his half sister.

He thought so to the last and was very happy always to come and see Sis, as he always called me. Yet it made my life a long-life lie to let him think I was truly his half sister when I was no relation whatever. But I never could do a thing to hurt him so I kept the secret from him and everyone, how I was just a stolen child took from most honorable parents. That is all the man would say, only I was just like my proud mother and looked like her too. Now who I was I never knew, for I was taken from my parents when a baby, he said, and left with the Pixleys. That is all I ever found out or know. Well I have lived to be eighty-one years old so it don't matter who I was or whence I came.

Now I will try to tell something of my fifty years of hard work and trouble after I married. For I was never free from hard work, care, and trouble until I was seventy years old. Then life began for me. For the most I knew about the man I married was that he was from a very nice family and much older than I was. Soon after we was married, some told how I had married a very wealthy man. That story caused me a lot of trouble. I soon found out that he had been worth a lot of money, but had spent 'most all of it in travelling, drinking, and gambling, and all he had left was the three hundred he had put in on the farm. And there was a claim on the horses that had got to be paid. So then I got a married woman's business certificate and got it recorded to do business on a separate account in my own name in order to save anything. Then I got some money to pay for the team.

I then had the money by me but could not go to see about it until the next day as my husband was away with the team and
An intruder. I was all alone on the farm. Our nearest neighbors was a half a mile away and they were an old lady over eighty years old and her husband over ninety years old. This is no romance, but just a true story. Now I will tell it in poetry just what happened.

It was in the month of December, I was then a fair young bride,
I left my childhood home to dwell down by the lake-shore side.

It was a cold winter, the streams all frozen o'er,
When a band of sparrows came up to our old farm door.

I made for them a shelter, I fed them from my hand,
For dearly did I love my little feathered band.
At last the Springtime came, the birds they went away.
Oh, how lonesome I was then, all alone day after day,
While my husband with the team was many miles away.

It was on a bright May morning, I started pies to make
And never thought of danger lurking by the lake,
When a shadow crossed the porch all by the open door,
And in my kitchen stood a great half-breed man
I had never seen before.

What is your business here? I asked as he before me stood.
For I thought his presence there was not for any good.
Ha ha, my little lady, if you would like to know,
I came to rob and murder you, into the lake your body throw.
You need not make an outcry, there is no one to know,
So just hand me your money, or in to the lake you go.

I did not get the money, I just sprung back a step or two,
Then quickly from my pocket a loaded pistol drew
Saying, Put up your hands, if you advance a step
I will shoot your body through,
For my little shooting iron has the drop on you.
Now step lively before it is too late.
I may dwell here by this lake, where some have met their fate,
But for a great bandit like you I shall never be fish bait.
My aim was true as I backed him out through the open door.
There I said good day to him and never see him more.

Well that was what tried to be my first holdup. I being a young girl,
he did not think of my turning the tables on him for he could of killed me
just as well as not, but he must of thought he could scare the money right
away from me. But I got back far enough so I knew he could not hit or kick
me and I sure was a good shot and knew just how to handle a pistol. So
I escorted him right to the door and that man never troubled me after that
little visit.

One day that summer my husband was going up to Stockbridge and

told me to stay with Mother and Arthur while he was gone. Then I found out they was all up there getting ready to go to see a band of roaming gypsies that had camped a few miles from there. Jay Pixley was going to take his team and lumber wagon, put some boards across the box for seats and take his wife, his brother, Ira, Clarence Johnson, and Mother and Arthur. Then they asked me to go with them. Then the men said they will want to tell our fortune. Now we will see if they can tell who is man and wife in this land or not. So they had Jay's wife sit with Ira, me sit with Clarence Johnson, Arthur and Mother sit on the driver's seat with Jay Pixley. Well the first thing when we got there a young woman came up to the wagon and said, Cross the gypsy's palm with money and have your fortune told.

So Ira said, I will make you acquainted with my wife.

So she spoke to Jay's wife and thought she was Ira's wife. Then I looked up in the lot where they had a big iron kettle of something cooking that looked just like ants, eggs and young ants. And by the side of that kettle sit what looked a mound of coarse black hair that was the old queen as she squatted on the ground. She had to part her hair to look out with her piercing black eyes. Then she called to Ira and said, She is not your wife at all, sir. A fine young husband she has on the driver's seat. See how well he handles the ribbons?

Gypsies.

Well she was right. Then Johnson introduced me as his wife and the young woman thought sure I was his wife. Then that old crone parted her hair to peek out again and said, She is not your wife at all sir, she has a husband now riding north.

That was true, for the road to Stockbridge went north. Then she told Johnson, You have a wife who is now on the water with a fair-haired boy.

His wife was on the pond at that time with a fair-haired boy, so that was true. Then the old queen wanted to tell my fortune. I was the only one in the load that she wanted to tell their fortune. I told her, No, mine would come fast enough.

Then she said, Girl, you don't believe in telling fortunes?

I told her I did not, then she said, Girl, you have a history. There is something you ought to know. I can tell you everything from the cradle to the grave.

I told her I did not want mine told, then she said, Girl, there is one thing I am going to tell you. Before many moons, there is a bad accident about to befall you. The gypsy queen has told you.

She told me the truth too, for it was but a few months after when I was to become a mother, I was driving my horse home, the road was wide enough for two teams to pass. I turned out in the ditch. A man came along,

he kept all the road, locked wheels with me and smashed my front wheel. That scarred my horse, so she ran and throwed me across the road on a rock where I was picked up for dead. So old queen told that all right, but my what a looking thing she was. Her hair reached the ground all around her just like a tent. In later years I often wished I had let her told my whole history, if she could tell as true as everything she did tell. She sure did look like a witch or something not at all human as she squatted on the ground. But the young lady, they said, was the queen's daughter dressed in very rich silk. Their wagon houses had lace curtains at the windows. In some windows the curtains was drawn aside so I could see beds all made up with white bedspreads. And that was the only band of roaming gypsies I ever see. I have seen other gypsies, but nothing like them.

Well that fall killed the child and almost took my life. It was a good thing I had my business affairs all fixed before I got hurt, for my husband had a judgement against him on an old law suit that I did not know about, something that happened before I ever met him of course. I knew I would be sick some time, so I left my business papers with the sheriff in Monterey. It was a good thing I did, for while I lay helpless a sheriff from another town came and attached everything I had for my husband's old law-suit bills. Langdon, the sheriff here in town, was gone that day. When he got home he found the attachment papers on his desk, so he got his horse and went after the other sheriff that left them there and told him to remove his attachment within twenty-four hours or he would make him jump. For said he, We do not know yet if the girl will live or die, but she has got everything salted, so you can never get anything from her for his bills, do not try anymore.

So that ended that trouble for no one tried to collect his debts of me after that.

Well that year I got seed buckwheat and got a man to raise it on halves, so it was gathered when I was took sick. Then my husband took the load of buckwheat off and sold it, he said to help me, as we did not have any money. Well he was gone two days, then came home drunk with a hurt shoulder and not a cent of money. He had spent it all and I lay in a cold room without a fire or any wood to make a fire with until Mrs. Snyder came to see me one day and told him if he did not get some wood for my room, she would complain of him. Then he got some wood for she said I would get my death cold like that. I was up to Mother's then for he would not work to get anything to live on.

At that time when he was drinking, if he did work and got money a great many times he would fool it away on cards and drink. When I could work I had to get the living. Finally the lake-shore farm was sold out. I

knew he would never pay for it. Then we went to live in one of Mother's houses and I raised garden vegetables to sell and took in sewing to do evenings. I had laid by a little money then, for I was to become a mother in the fall.

So that year he done some better. He planted and raised a piece of potatoes and some corn. I used to ride the horse that summer for him to cultivate the corn and potatoes. We only kept one horse then. We had two cows, a pig, a sheep, and chickens. So we were getting along better. Then in the fall or late summer it was Arthur, my half brother as I call him, who had a bad fever and his Mother took care of him until the thirteenth of September. Then my girl was born. I had a woman with me for I had not

*An independent
married woman.*

been well for some time. When my baby was a week old and Arthur just beginning to walk around a little, his Mother and my supposed-to-be-Mother went violently insane and was running in the road. People was afraid of her and

complained of her to the town. Then Merrick Langdon, he was the sheriff, came to see me about it. They wanted to send her off but she had always begged of us if she was took with them insane spells not to let her be sent to the insane hospital, and she never had been. I knew what made her insane. Her boy was her idol and she thought he was going to die so I told Mr. Langdon not to make any trouble and as soon as I could get out of bed I would see she should be taken care of. I thought it would be one more week.

Then Mr. Langdon said, We are afraid she will kill you out, then the town will have them all to take care of, for you are the only main stay of them all to look after everything.

I told him I thought I could fix it so she would be all right, soon as I could get up and around. So he left it all with me. The woman I had with me got afraid of her and left. Then I got a man and his wife to come and help, for Arthur was not able to do anything. So I knew it must all depend on me, the poor little stolen waif that they robbed of her name and birthright. They was to tell me of my parents and bring me up by their name but they did not so I do not know who I am, only my parents was most honorable people.

That is all I ever could find out and I sure would like to see that seventy-two foot well opened down to the bottom. I think then there would be plenty of water on that corner and never will be until it is done. I do not wonder Arthur's Mother had insane spells when I think of all she had to go through for what she was not to blame. For I used to pity her and feel sorry for her, but I done the best I could for her. When she had her spells this time she kept growing worse and for two months was a

very dangerous insane person. It kept two men night and day to take care of her, for I had a young baby. So I had to have a woman to help me in my house across the road from Mother's. Sometimes she would holler we was starving and freezing her to death, when she would tare her clothes all off and throw her food away and smash up the dishes. Then she smashed out the window lights in the kitchen so they had to shut her in a room that had one small window in it, so small she could not get out of it.

One day when the men was eating their dinner over to my house I got some toast and corn starch pudding and a cup of tea ready for her. I told the men I would take it over to her. They told me I better not for she had...

Mrs. Brantley's Postscript

This is where the composition book ends. I'm sure there is another one somewhere, but I do not have it. Does anyone reading this know where the other book might be? Sure would be nice if we could find it. Check your attic for old papers in an old trunk, etc.

This was typed and edited by Flora Ellen McCarthy Brantley, great granddaughter of Hannah Climena Pixley. As you can tell, I did not change much of the English grammar. I thought it would take away from the story, so I left the grammar alone.

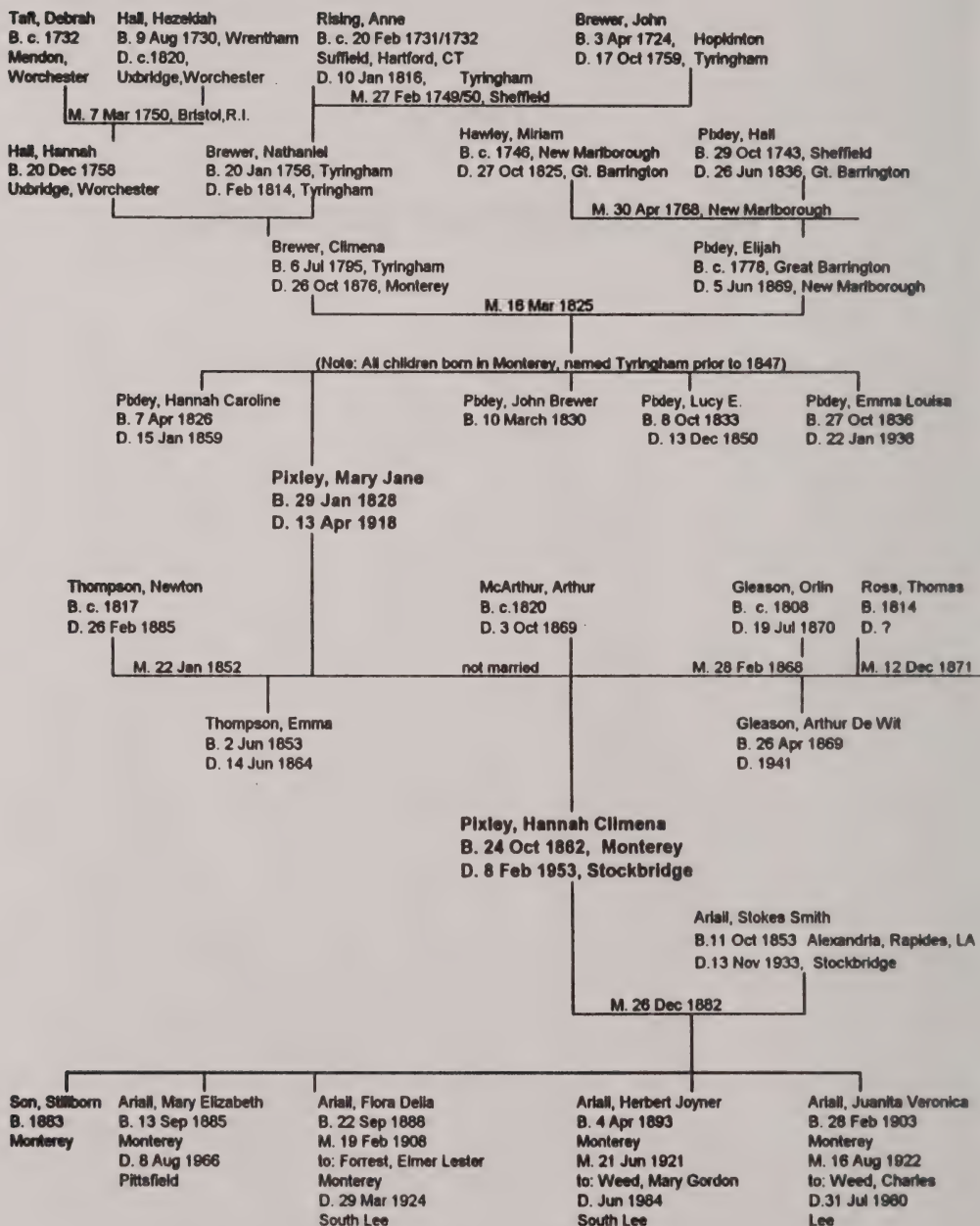
In this story, Hannah Climena talks about not knowing her real parentage. The only thing that I have found is that in the will of Orlin Gleason, her step-father, he states that his wife's daughter's name was Hannah Climena McArthur. There was only one man living in that area at that time with the name of McArthur and his name was Arthur McArthur. He was already married and died young. I believe this Arthur McArthur could have been the father of Hannah Climena. She [Mary Jane Pixley] even named her only son Arthur. It is a shame that Hannah Climena died not knowing who she really was.

— Mrs. Flora Brantley

PART II

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The Pixley Family Tree



A Brief Genealogy

Mrs. Flora Brantley, granddaughter of Flora Delia Ariail, the third of five children born to Hannah Climena Pixley Ariail, generously provided nineteen pages of the family genealogy. The pedigree charts she has worked on for many years trace the family back to the colonial period. We focus here on the branches of the tree directly relating to Hannah Climena Pixley Ariail and her children.

In our chart the mother of each offspring appears on the left of the parental pairing (with the exception of Mary Jane Pixley, putative mother of Hannah Climena). We have generally excluded siblings, except those important in the autobiography. Where available, marriage data has been included on the marital pairing line.

From the very beginning of her autobiography, Hannah Climena maintains there was an untold secret surrounding her birth and parentage, a mystery that remains unsolved in the story she set down. She calls Mary Jane Pixley her "supposed-to-be mother," and wonders why a well on her grandfather's farm that was a good source of water, difficult and expensive to dig, was covered over about the time of her birth. This well was the sole source of water on the farm, and stoning it up necessitated subsequent purchase of a water right, ditching and laying pipe for a quarter mile, and building "a water house with a great deep watering trough running through it out to the highway to water thirsty horses." The reader cannot help but wonder what, or who, was thrown down the well. Why, asks Hannah Climena, was she raised by Mary Jane's parents for the first six years of her life? Definitive answers to these questions are not found in materials that have come to light. But we do know more than the autobiography tells us.

Mary Jane Pixley was the second-oldest of five children born to Climena Brewer and Elijah Pixley. All five children were born in Monterey (called Tyringham at the time). It is known that Mary Jane was married three times and bore three children. She was married first in 1852, to Newton Thompson. Her first daughter by this first marriage, Emma Thompson, died at the age of eleven in 1864. Whether or not Mary Jane was formally divorced from Newton Thompson, the marriage must have fallen apart, for Mary Jane married her second husband, Orlin Gleason, in 1868. Their only child was Arthur De Wit Gleason, born in 1869.

Hannah Climena, second child of Mary Jane Pixley, was born in 1862, two years before the death of Emma Thompson and six years before Mary Jane's marriage to Orlin Gleason.

Hannah said, "It always seemed strange to me that my own mother should cast a side her own child to nurse and love another not her own.

By the way, the girl she did nurse is dead." This may be Emma Thompson, but she is not mentioned by name anywhere in the autobiography.

Orlin Gleason died in 1870 and Mary Jane married Thomas Ross in 1871. They did not have any children.

Orlin Gleason's last will and testament, signed with an "x" designated as "his mark," was dictated on July 16, 1869. This was a year before his death and only months after the birth of his only son. In the will, Gleason leaves all his property first to his wife Mary Jane, then to their son Arthur, and, finally, if he is deceased, Gleason provides that "all my estate shall go to Hannah C. McArthur daughter of my wife before our marriage." When Flora Brantley searched Berkshire County genealogical records of the period, she found only one McArthur, a man whose first name was Arthur, and who lived in Sheffield. (It also seems noteworthy that the only son of Orlin Gleason and Mary Jane Pixley was named Arthur.) The will establishes that Mary Jane *was* Hannah's mother, and suggests that Arthur McArthur was her father. She was evidently born out of wedlock, as Mary Jane Pixley and Arthur McArthur were never married.

We may speculate from this evidence that Hannah Climena was born during a turbulent period in Mary Jane's life when her first-born daughter by her first marriage (which ended in estrangement) was mortally ill at a young age. Possibly Mary Jane, overwhelmed by her bad luck and troubles, left her infant daughter Hannah to be raised in her parents' household, making the best of a bad situation. Perhaps circumstances improved around the time of her marriage to Orlin Gleason, and Hannah came to live with her for the first time.

We may know more of her birth than Hannah Climena did herself. Perhaps she never saw Orlin Gleason's last will and testament, or her name written down with the surname McArthur. Family members say she remained close to her half-brother Arthur Gleason throughout her life, but perhaps he was unaware of the McArthur connection or kept his silence. He died by his own hand in 1941.

In the opening lines of her life story, Hannah Climena comments that "as I write this, the last one has gone down to the grave with one secret untold, that could I think of [have] told everything." It appears from the genealogy that she is referring to Mary Jane's eldest sister, Emma Louisa Pixley, who died in 1936, when Hannah Climena was 74, and started dictating her story. Emma Louisa would have been the last surviving member of the immediate family, aside from Arthur Gleason.

— Ian Jenkins and Peter Murkett



((This is to Certify))

That Mr. Newton Thompson of Colebrook in the State of
Connecticut and Miss Mary Jane Pixley of Monticeny
in the State of Massachusetts were By me joined together in

HOLY MATRIMONY

on the Twenty Second day of January in the Year of our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Two

(In Presence of)

John B. Pixley

Rachael M. Bessie & others

Jesse H. Ham
Minister of the Gospel
in the Methodist Episcopal Church

Dated at Monticeny, State of Massachusetts on the

Twenty Second day of the Month of January

The marriage certificate of Mary Jane Pixley and Newton Thompson of
Colebrook, Connecticut. He was the first of her three husbands.

I give to my beloved Wife Mary the use of all my property
both real and personal which I may be owner of at my
decease after the payment of all my just debts during
her life then it is to go to her child my son Arthur
Swett Gleason but in case of his decease it is my will
that all my estate shall go to Hannah G. M. Carter daughter
of my Wife before our marriage
Lastly I hereby appoint John F. Hanger the Executor of the
my last Will and testament of which I have
subscribed at my last the 16th day of July 1869
Signed and declared by the said
Orlin Gleason as and for his last
Will and testament in the presence
of us who at his request and in his
presence do hereunto set our names

Orlin Gleason
Hans

From the will of Orlin Gleason.

From the *County Atlas of 1876*

The *County Atlas of Berkshire, Massachusetts*, based on surveys conducted by F. W. Beers, was published by R. T. White and Company, New York, in 1876. Readers of Hannah Pixley's autobiography can find some locations in her story on these maps.

The detail in Figure 1, from a map of Great Barrington, shows a place belonging to H. W. Wright on Railroad Street (above the "D" in "Railroad"), likely the bar where Newton Joyner sold bunches of winter greens for the young Hannah Pixley.

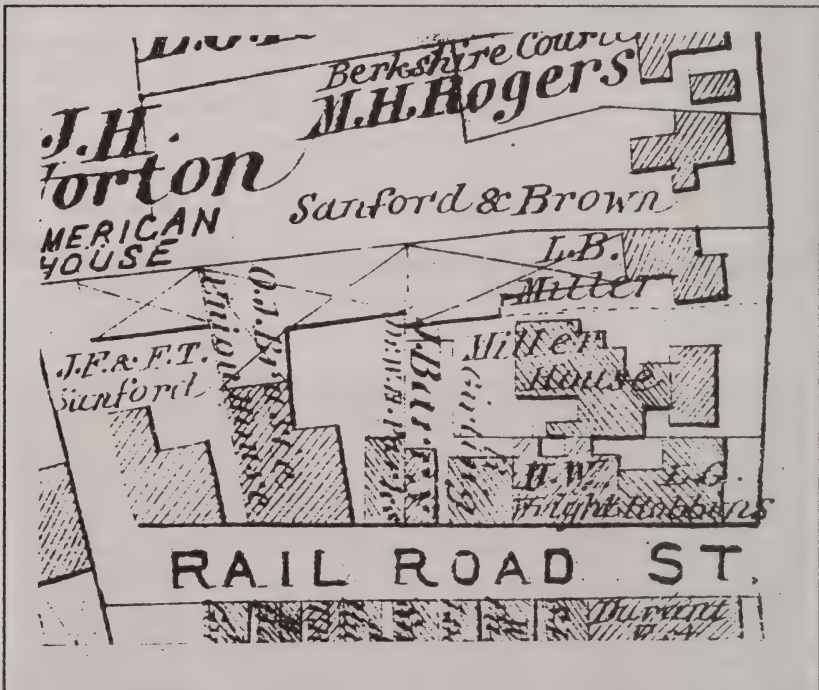


Figure 1. Detail from a Beers map of Great Barrington, 1876.

The map in Figure 2 was pieced together from separate Beers maps of Great Barrington and Monterey. The dot-and-dash vertical line is the town boundary near where the Appalachian Trail now crosses Route 23. Hannah lived with Mary Jane Pixley and her half-brother Arthur Gleason in the house labeled "Mrs. Ross." In the house designated "J. B. Pixley" was Mary Jane's brother John. By the date of this map he would have served his three-year sentence for manslaughter in the death of Orlin Gleason (see pp. 48-51).

“Provident Beartown Women”

Hannah Pixley always raised her own food and medicinal herbs. *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* published a report on the life of “Mrs. Ariail” and her daughter on August 21, 1936, under the headline, “Provident Beartown Women Prepare for Long Winter.” It was written about the time that Hannah Pixley Ariail began to dictate her life story. The article read as follows:

Five months ago today an Eagle reporter paid a visit to Mrs. M. H. Ariail, 74, and her daughter, Mary, 51 who were at the time snowbound in their ancient home atop Beartown Mountain. He skied over three miles of snow to reach the pair but yesterday he was able to drive his automobile to their front door.



This is one of the two photographs in the Eagle story. Here “Mrs. M. H. Ariail” (Hannah Climena) is on the left, and Mary is on the right.

The unexpected visitor was as welcome as before. When he arrived Mrs. Ariail was working in her garden behind the old cow barn and the daughter was at the stove canning vegetables in preparation for the long winter. They stopped work and invited him in.

In Good Health

They look better now than they did last February. Mrs. Ariail explained that the out of door work agrees with them. And speaking of health, Mrs. Ariail told about coming to Beartown 43 years ago.

She said when "I was 31 years old I built a home on the Lake Buel Road. I became ill one day and the doctor was called. After examining me thoroughly he told me I had tuberculosis and should move to Colorado immediately. He said the climate was better there but also said I wouldn't live more than six months. And so I says to him if I'm going to die soon I want to be near my children. He was a bit disgusted with me I guess but anyway I moved up here to Beartown 43 years ago and here I am just as healthy as anyone on this earth."

The Ariails were snowbound and mudbound from November until June. Their provisions lasted just long enough. In January Mrs. Ariail fell downstairs and injured her head. The next day a log fell on her daughter's foot. They treated their injuries as best they could and it wasn't until June that they were given treatment by a doctor. Dr. George S. Wickman of Lee examined the two on their first trip into Lee this summer. He found Mary had dislocated a bone in her foot at the time the log fell on it. Mrs. Ariail's injury had healed.

Spaded Own Garden

Because a team of horses couldn't get through the muddy road to the Ariail home in May, Mrs. Ariail and daughter had to spade their own garden this year. "That's the reason the garden is planted every which way," said Mrs. Ariail. The ground is pretty hard in places and the seeds were planted wherever the spading was good. Many kinds of vegetables are being grown by them including carrots, cauliflower, peas, beans, corn, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce and others. They also grow citron.

The two women said they are kept busy canning from the time the dandelions start until the frost. Besides growing vegetables they grow many flowers. They work in the gardens all day and do the housework and canning in the early evening. Asked what they did with all the beautiful flowers, Mrs. Ariail said: "We like to make people happy. In the summer I send bunches of flowers to shut-ins and many times I arrange flowers for friends who have passed on. That's what flowers are for and that's why our flowers grow so well."

Mrs. Ariail composes poems while she works. While picking a

bunch of flowers for the reporter to take back home she recited the following:—

Two Poems

I care not for wealth, fame or show
And to the garden I take my hoe,
Compose my poems as I follow my row.
For the work that I do keeps me happy all day
As I listen to the birds as they sing away,
For well I know they're singing songs of cheer
They seem so happy to live up here.

Another one of her compositions follows:—

Some are fond of travel
They always like to roam.
But give to me the woodland beauty
That surrounds my mountain home.



*Mary (left) and Hannah Climena (right) in their garden
at the house on Beartown Road.*

The Ariail House on Beartown Road



*Hannah and Mary hung this pencil drawing of their house in the parlor.
The artist has not been identified.*

Historical Notes

The childhood Hannah Climenta described was not the norm. Apparently her family was very poor, and relied on a way of living that most people in Monterey had given up due to technological advances.

For instance, it is unusual that her grandmother was still spinning and weaving in the 1860s. This is very late for these activities, which declined during the period 1810–1820. It was just too easy and cheap to buy cloth made in factories. This indicates not only that her grandparents were poor, but also that Monterey was rural and isolated, although I'm sure that most people here did not spin or weave. It is also late for cooking on the hearth and baking in a brick oven. Most people could afford and used cast iron cookstoves during this period.

As for her grandfather sleeping downstairs in the all-purpose kitchen, I believe this was a common practice. Why go upstairs when it was cold? We might think downstairs bedrooms inappropriate, but we can more easily heat upstairs rooms. As I recall, six beds were listed in Reverend Adonijah Bidwell's inventory. Since the Manse has only two bedrooms and a garret upstairs, the assumption is reasonable that there were beds downstairs as well.

— Lisa Simpson, Director, 1992-1994
The Bidwell House Museum, Monterey

The Death of Orlin Gleason and the Trial of John Pixley

No account of the brutal fight between the young Hannah Pixley's stepfather and uncle is more telling and powerful than her own, the memory of what she witnessed as a child. News stories in the *Berkshire Courier* and *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* generally corroborate Hannah Pixley's version of the fight. They also reveal details and nuances surrounding the crime that add historical perspective to the personal account.

There were five separate stories, three in issues of the *Courier* dated July 20 and 27, 1870, and January 25, 1871, and two stories in one issue of the *Eagle* dated August 11, 1870. All report a mutual hatred between John Pixley and Orlin Gleason that apparently became focused on, or grew from, a dispute over some wagons. A reporter who interviewed John Pixley in jail wrote in the *Eagle* of August 11 that Pixley told him he "had loaned Gleason some wagons which he could not get him to return, so he sent for them and took them away. This seems to have aroused the Gleason ire, and the unfortunate fight took place at their first meeting." It must have been a powerful ire, for in the first *Courier* story Pixley says "Gleason threatened to take his life, and would dance on his coffin." Pixley met this venom with his own; in the second *Courier* story a week later, it was reported:

Pixley had said subsequent to the affray, but previous to the death of Gleason, when told his skull was broken that he (Pixley) wished it was his neck... Pixley told somebody at Hartsville, that Gleason called him a thief, while lying on the ground, and unable to speak loud, but gasped and whispered out the obnoxious epithet, showing 'game' to the last.

Thus a murderous, mutual enmity is thoroughly documented. The local response to its consequences may be evidence of the favor Pixley enjoyed over Gleason in their immediate locality. The *Eagle* of August 11 has it that "the murder of Orlin Gleason...and circumstances connected therewith, require more than a passing notice." The story continues:

After the fact that Gleason was dead, and that his death was caused by blows inflicted by Pixley, was known to all in this vicinity, had it not been for action of others than the proper authorities of this town [Great Barrington], the remains of the murdered man would have been consigned to the grave without the least investigation of the circumstances attending the murder, and Pixley today

would have been as free as you or me, and none would have ever inquired of him why did you so? And this state of things existed, notwithstanding the fact that in the same school district where the murder was committed, and fully cognizant of the facts, lives one of the selectmen of the town, who is also justice of the peace, who held and exercised the office of trial justice until our district court dispensed with his services in that capacity, a man who has formerly held the office of Deputy Sheriff for many years, and who s[h]ould but have known that there being no coroner in the town it became his duty, of all other men, to move in the matter. But no, the people waited, but waited in vain, until some private citizens, unwilling that such a reproach as the burial of the murdered man without an inquest would occasion, should rest upon the town, called upon Noah Gibson, Esq., to see if these things *must be*. While talking with Mr. Gibson, one of the selectmen of Gt. Barrington, accompanied by a physician, came along on their way to investigate the matter, they having heard that there was a prospect of the remains being interred without an inquest; and thus the citizens of New Marlboro were subjected to a humiliation which they do most keenly feel, and which they will be slow to forget. Under the impetus received from this outside source, a jury was summoned, and Harlow S. Underwood, Esq., the selectman above referred to, officiated as coroner; facts were elicited which were deemed sufficient to warrant the arrest of Pixley, which was accordingly done, and he was duly examined before Judge Sumner of our district court, and by him committed until next January court to be holden at Pittsfield.

There were more people there anxious to hear the trial than could enter the court room; the stairs were crowded, and it was judged that more than one hundred people were obliged to go away, not being able to hear the examination. Pixley is an able-bodied man, weighing about 160 pounds, and 36 years old. It was urged upon the Court that he had never been known to strike a man before. There was no eye witness to the fight between Pixley and Gleason except Pixley's sister, the widow of Gleason, and her testimony was incoherent and wholly unreliable, as she was evidently not in her right mind, and was a raving maniac on the night after the court, and it was necessary to confine her with cords for some days after the trial. Therefore, in absence of direct and disinterested testimony we must draw upon the probabilities of the case.

Pixley's story before the court was that he drew near the house of Gleason and sat in his wagon in the road, when Gleason came out to him, his eyes looking like two balls of fire and instantly commenced throwing stones at him, from the size of goose eggs to that of quart bowls, meanwhile calling him a d——d thief and robber, and various hard names, swearing he would kill him and dance on his corpse, etc. Pixley was compelled to leave his wagon to dodge the stones, but Gleason pressing hard upon him, stoning and

kicking him, Pixley commenced whipping Gleason with the lash of his whip, but was obliged to turn the butt and finally was obliged to jump into his wagon and drive off, while Gleason followed him filling the air with stones, still threatening his life. Thus you will see that he made it a war of self defence on his part. But the public must judge for themselves whether the story is a rational one or not. Whether a man 58 years old, sickly and so much emaciated that although of quite a large frame the physician thought he would not weight over 105 lbs., who had received 18 contusions upon his head, whose skull was broken in two places, whose body upon the breast bore marks of many blows. It is for the public to judge whether a man of the above description, after having received the wounds that Gleason had received, would follow a man, stoning, cursing, and threatening him as he went. Some weeks previous to the murder, the parties had a dispute in Hartsville, in the course of which Gleason taunted Pixley with being a thief, and abused him with his tongue as was his custom to abuse all he did not like. The assault was made on Sunday afternoon, Gleason died the following Tuesday morning before daylight. On Monday evening, previous to Gleason's death, Pixley was informed in the store at Hartsville that Gleason's skull was broken, in two places.; he replied that he wished it was broken in four places, wished it had been his neck, would have been glad if he had killed the d-n cuss, &c. It is a question in the minds of many whether Pixley was repelling an assault upon his person or was goaded into madness by the tongue of Gleason.

Another story in the same edition of the *Eagle* (August 11), based on an interview with Pixley in jail at Lenox, reports that

Pixley first heard of the fatal result when he enquired for whom the bell was tolling, and was arrested for the crime as he was harnessing his horse to attend the funeral of his victim. As told by him there is [sic] certainly extenuating circumstances, and he is hopeful of acquittal, or at least a light sentence. He is terribly saddened over the affair, has very little to say to visitors, and spends most of him [sic] time reading the bible. He is a man of some property, and his neighbors accord him the usual respect of a well-behaved, industrious citizen.

This description of the situation a few weeks after the fight contrasts with the first *Courier* report on July 20, one day after Gleason's death and the very day of the inquest. That report concluded, "The testimony at the inquest was severe upon Pixley, and it may go hard with him."

In the end, it did not "go hard" with John Pixley. At the trial in January of the following year, 1871, Mary Jane Pixley recounted the fight much

as Hannah Climena does in her autobiography. They were the sole witnesses (not counting the infant Arthur Gleason), and both mention Gleason using a fence stake in his assault on Pixley. Her credibility was in doubt, however, because of her close relations with both combatants, and because of her manner on the stand. In the *Courier* of January 25, 1871, we read:

The testimony of Gleason's widow was as much as she could make it in favor of her brother. Hers was a hard position for a woman, the widow of a murdered man testifying in favor of the murderer, and yet how could she be expected to swear against her brother? It is a great pity that she could not be left out of the case...

The appearance and actions of this woman on the stand were very singular; she would laugh and gabble, and was evidently either hysterical or confused out of her senses by the recollections of the bloody event or the embarrassing circumstance of being a witness in such a case.

The jury heard seven witnesses for the prosecution and four for the defense. One of two defense attorneys, a Mr. Branning, made the closing argument, "which is spoke of as being a strong and eloquent one. He occupied about an hour and the District Attorney about half that time in reply." Following an afternoon of deliberation by the jury, Pixley was found guilty of manslaughter. At sentencing, Mr. Branning

spoke of the prisoner's previous good character, of the evident absence of any malignity or intent to kill on the part of Pixley; of his motherless children, and the hardship of having already been 6 months in jail without a chance of bail. Mr. Gillett [the Attorney General] made no opposition. Pixley on being asked if he desired to say anything said, "He could declare his innocence before God and man; the testimony against him was all false." The judge then said that it was his practice where a life had been taken to pass a heavy sentence, but in consideration of the paper presented by the jurymen, and the statements of the counsel, he would impose but a light sentence, which was imprisonment in the Berkshire House of Correction, at hard labor, for three years.

— Peter Murkett

will be untill it is done, i do not wonder arthurs
mother had insane spells when i think of all she
had to go through for what she was not to blame
for i used

HANNAH CLIMENA PIXLEY

A Life in Monterey, 1862-1953

At the heart of this booklet is the recently discovered autobiography of a strong farm woman and mother who endured crushing hardship to achieve independence and dignity.

Hannah Pixley, born in Monterey, Massachusetts, during the Civil War, was raised in poverty and indifference by her "supposed" mother and grandparents. Eventually she married and bore five children while working the land and caring for her mother. She lived well into modern times, always keeping country ways. Her oral narrative, written down by her daughter, forms an authentic piece of history not found in textbooks; it adds to our understanding of the role taken by women in rural New England.

In an unschooled, haunting voice Hannah Pixley tells a compelling story of family relationships, struggle, and simple joy.

the best i c
this tim
months w
two men
a young br
my horse
times she
her to dea
off and th
dishes i
the kitch

That had one small window in it so small she
could not get out of it one day when the men was
eating their dinner over to my house i got her
some toast and corn starch pudding and a cup of
tea ready for her i told the men i would take it
over to her they told me i beter not for she had

'ot i done
ells
for two
son it kept
er for i had
help me in
some
freezing
a ball
up the
s lighte in
a room



MONTEREY
NEWS

